

1143 dates, ground nuts, spices and ghee butter. One shop was devoted
 [276] entirely to hubble-bubble pipes and we watched an old Arab
 carving a pipe stem. The stems, which are of bamboo, are fitted
 with a brass ring near the top to form a lip for the smoker, the body
 of the stem being delicately covered with gold and silver thread.
 The second stem, through which the air escapes, is of plain bamboo,
 engraved with Arabic designs which are carved, with a red-hot
 knife, and then coloured with indigo. The bowl, made of unglazed
 pottery, has a slender neck flared at the top. These pipes cost
 about ten rupees each, the stems being a rupee extra.

Some of the shops are well stocked with canned goods and
 haberdashery from the Indian market, and one saw shelves full
 of sewing cotton, buttons, metal polish, brass lamps, and cheap
 cloth. A common sight is raw cotton, still in its pods, which is
 gathered from trees in the interior; untreated hemp and tobacco
 leaves, crudely dried. There were few carpets, and those we saw
 were of indifferent quality. A few of the merchants appeared to be
 well-off and one or two had robes of coloured silk, edged with
 gold thread. They had noble, intelligent faces, and one patriarch,
 with a snow-white beard and spotless linen *abbas*, looked out of
 place in that ill-assorted crowd. A large sapphire ring sparkled
 on his finger and his long, thin hands were those of an artist. One
 181 must be careful not to judge the Arab by Western standards, since
 dirt and insanitation are not abhorrent to them as they are to us.
 Even a cultured and fastidious Arab may have manners which
 would be out of place in a London drawing-room.

562 Apart from little girls up to ten years of age, we saw very few
 women, and they were heavily veiled. We walked to the little
 396 quay, which was clustered with dhows and rowing boats and
 501 watched the intense activity of shipbuilding and repairing that was
 in progress. The seams of the hulls are caulked with raw cotton
 and then covered with pitch, and the bottoms are painted with
 lime mixed with shark's oil, a good preservative. The upper
 part of the hull, above the water line, is also varnished with fish
 oil. Some of the sails are enormous and stretch from bows to
 stern, giving the dhows great speed on the water. This is
 necessary since they have to cover great distances, especially in the
 pearling season, when they may have to sail seventy miles in a
 single day to reach the beds.

501 There was quite a chilly breeze as we entered a ferryboat and
 were rowed across the creek, although the sun was still high above

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the horizon. It took about eight minutes to cross the creek, which is half a mile wide at this point, but the boats are heavy and clumsily made and the oars consist of rectangular boards nailed to a large pole. The boat was run on to the muddy, steep shore and we jumped out, picking our way amongst garbage and squatting Arabs. 501

The houses in Dubai Town, at the western and south side of the creek, are larger and more imposing than those in Dera; many of them have square towers and Persian ventilators, with verandas of Moorish design which lean dangerously away from the walls in cantilever fashion. The town is built upon the sides of a sloping hill, with a sandstone foundation, and the houses are curiously stepped or terraced; one walks along a road to find it is the roof of a house and, peering over the edge, sees another street below. The top of the hill is dominated by the sheikh's palace—a sandstone shell, no longer occupied, although the ruler's flag flies from the main tower. The Sheikh of Dubai lives in a walled house on the far side of the creek, overlooking the harbour and the sea. 342

The houses in the residential section of Dubai are large and clean, with high white walls and magnificent doorways of Moorish design. Some of the richer merchants' dwellings have small streets within their walls, with twisting alleys, steep flights of stone stairs and dark, cool rooms leading from the covered courtyards. One has the strange feeling in Dubai of being indoors all the time; this is because all the streets are roofed with palm-matting and one seldom sees the sky. It was rather like a visit to an Arab village at the British Exhibition in Wembley, except that this was the real thing, with all the aromas and colours of reality. Yet Dubai is remarkably clean for an Arab town, and some of the open booths and shops have first-class wares for sale. I have bought leather travelling bags here—made by native craftsmen—which were as handsome and well-made as anything at Fortnum & Mason's, and the Persian shops have stocks of modern and antique carpets which would please the most fastidious collector or decorator. 361

In one of the smaller houses on the highest terrace we found Mr. Jam Shan, the pearl merchant, who invited us into his dark and tiny sitting-room office. Both he and his sons wore shirts and trousers, smoked English cigarettes, and conversed in quite good Cockney, as they had spent many years in London. With the radio blaring an Indian song they sat bare-legged on the floor and resumed their work of sorting and counting the heap of pearls. 443

441 before them. Jam Shan senior, whose family has been engaged in the pearl business for more than a hundred years, told me amusing stories of his visits to Paris where he once had an office in the Rue de la Paix.

From an old iron safe he produced two coarse linen bags, tied with string and sealed with wax, and undid the string. One bag contained seed pearls of little value or beauty; the other bulged with hundreds of pearls of every shape and size—yellow, black, pink and moon-white. One, which he placed in the palm of my hand, was priced at £50. It was a perfect sphere, of a delicate rose-pink, lit with a hundred facets of light, soft and lustrous, like moonlight on a desert pool. Its incomparable sheen mirrored every movement and, on looking into its depths one could see hues of red and mauve. To match this pearl for a necklace Jam Shan told me, might take him three years; but when it was complete it would be worth a fortune. There was none other like it in the collection, although there were hundreds with delicate hues and lustres, from pale silvery pink to yellow-gold.

[51] We declined the tea and rice cakes which were offered to us, and as Jam Shan bowed us out of the room he apologized for his poor collection and promised to show us some rarities the next time we called. It was ironical to think that a mere handful of those gleaming balls of nacre, manufactured by the oyster to cover an irritation, would keep a family in luxury and comfort for several years. The expenses of the average Arab household, in the poorer quarter, are about £50 a year—the value of a single pearl! And yet Mr. Jam Shan and others like him, who could find a million pounds with ease if they required it, live so simply themselves that £250 would probably cover their personal and household expenses per annum.

[471] Our next visit was to the home of Basil Lermite, of the Petroleum Concession. This house, which is situated on the waterfront, is one of the most imposing in Dubai. It is only two storeys high but has an enormous frontage and the verandas and ornamental Persian columns on the façade are richly painted in red and blue. Two armed, uniformed guards examined our credentials at the gateway, and then conducted us through the open courtyard to Mr. Lermite's quarters; the courtyard was a blaze of colour, bougainvillea and roses growing in profusion. There was a little marble fountain in the centre, and along the walls were peach, pomegranate and fig trees.